

THE LONG VIEW: MIKE GEORGE



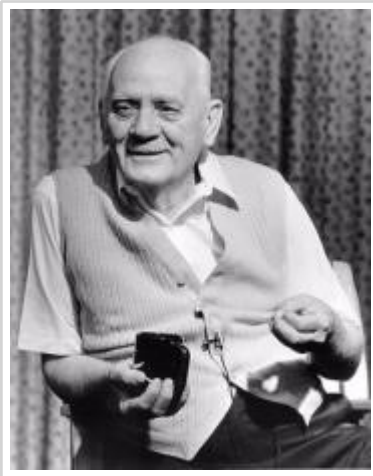
Mike is driving a program participant to the airport and she's pumping him for information. "What do you do at The Institute?" she asks. "I drive," says Mike. "Yes, but what do you *really* do?"

Getting to know Mike George is to understand that question. He's been shuttling participants between Charlottesville and TMI for about twenty-five years now, off and on, but if you suspect he plays a bigger role, you would be correct. "I have a lot of fun with what I do and I try to do it with integrity. For many people I hold a history of the Institute and I try to relay that perspective to people if they ask for it."

Mike's introduction to the notion of "astral travel" came in the early 70s with an article in *High Times*, a then popular counterculture magazine. Soon after, Mike read Robert Monroe's ***Journeys Out of the Body*** and thought it was the wildest, craziest thing he'd ever encountered. OBE -- who does that! Mentioning it at work, Mike was amazed to learn that a couple of colleagues regularly enjoyed out-of-body adventures. That did it. Time to find out for himself.

In 1984 Mike rode his bicycle from California to Virginia for his first **Gateway Voyage®**. A practitioner of Shotokan Karate, a traditional Okinawan form of karate, Mike was trained in the management and focus of energy. His Gateway experience was complementary in that

respect. Moreover, he established a conscious relationship with Guidance and felt deeply drawn to explore further.



Mike moved to Virginia in 1985 and attended his second Gateway. In those days Bob talked each evening to the participants. Mike remembers, "He was really magical back then - he way he worked the room -- we were really connected with him."

At that time the newly constructed Lab was headed up by Rita and Martin Warren. Sessions similar to the original Explorer Program were held in the isolation booth -- a state-of-the-art "dry float" environment protected from electromagnetic radiation (EMF) and external vibration, wired for light, sound, and two-way communication with a monitor in the control room, and with

equipment to measure and record body voltage changes throughout the sessions. Hemi-Sync® signals were custom-fed to the subject in the booth. This system utilized three people - the subject, the monitor, and the technician.



**Robert Monroe Memorial Lab •
photo by Fay Atwater**

Mike landed at The Institute with no particular ambition but a strong inclination to be a part of the work in the Lab. For the next eighteen months he trained and served mainly as a technician, eventually a monitor, and intermittently a subject.

Following a one-year hiatus in Florida, Mike was back to discover the answer to an inner question, "Am I done here, or not?" Apparently, and fortunately, not.

TMI was growing and the number of programs had increased significantly. Mike

assumed a major portion of the driving. It's fairly safe to assume that if you have flown into Charlottesville, Virginia, for a residential program at the Nancy Penn Center or Roberts Mountain Retreat center since 1988, you have been shuttled to and fro by Mike.

Further, if you have claimed the "story seat," the position next to the driver, you know that there are no free rides. Mike requires that everyone in that seat tell a story. It's one of the perks of his transport job that he's, "met so many people who tell great stories."

Some of the best stories are Mike's. One day, bringing a single passenger from the airport, Mike spotted a group of vultures in the field across from the Center. He stopped to get a better view of those iconic birds doing their thing. "They usually don't let you get this close," he remarked. As he pointed out the dead groundhog they were eating one of the birds pulled something long and stringy out of it. With that, the passenger screeched in his ear, "Lets get out of here!!" Mike thought, "But we're so close!"

Mike's role as driver is the structure that supports what one could say is his deeper purpose at TMI. Though he would not make this claim, to passengers he is often much more than the guy who picks them up at the airport. Whether people are here for the first time, filled with nervous excitement, or returning TMI program grads coming "home," Mike meets them where they are with acceptance and humor. He's there for them in a meaningful way. And it's a two-way street. "I really relate to the participants. We're all on that journey together. A lot of what I do is be there with their journeys. Sometimes I get real insights from the conversations with participants while driving. I feel myself there with them."

On a mundane and pragmatic level Mike's comprehensive and eclectic skill set has saved the day on many occasions. • During the 1990s he illustrated the covers for almost forty of TMI's Human-Plus exercises. Mike is also the painter of George Durrette's portrait seen in a previous Newsletter article. • He's an offset printing pressman. This skill served TMI well when Mike was able to coordinate some of our large print jobs in the days before digital publication became the norm. • He's good at fixing all kinds of things -- a valuable talent at a facility like this. From electrical and electronic to mechanical, Mike has resurrected dozens of devices and systems. • He has occasionally served as photographer for TMI events, including the recent Professional Seminar.

In answer to the question, "Am I done here?" probably the most significant life event Mike had yet to experience was meeting his great love and future mate, Jeanne, a staffer at The Institute. They have been together now for 24 years.

Meanwhile, Mike has attended about 25 TMI programs and shared with hundreds of fellow participants the powerful connection we make through the particular style of consciousness exploration that is our gift from Bob Monroe.

How would Mike George describe Bob? "He was a character. He had a lot of different sides to him.

He was human. He had his flaws and things he was great at. I very much respect him." Like many, Mike is deeply appreciative of Bob's having resisted the "guru" or spiritual leader label, of his lack of pretension and his encouragement of others to "find out for yourself." "I'm very grateful for everything Bob has done and I'm very grateful for how he did it."

Mike remembers a particular incident that brought home Bob's priorities. This was a ceremony unveiling a bronze bust of Bob. Bob graciously participated in the brief program, then, as he exited the room, passing by Jeanne, the Center director's assistant, he said to her, "Did you get that stuff in the septic tank?"

Mike's life changed direction after his Gateway, and directional shifts have continued throughout the years and programs following. "I really grew up at TMI and am so happy to be a part of it."